

The Arctic Region: A New Model of the Future Planning

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Abstract: The Arctic region has recently become a territory of a huge economic and political interest. But the risks of different character lock the development of the concerned region. The paper deals with the problems of effective modeling and planning for the future of the Arctic. The authors examine the programs of the ruling political parties of the United States and the Russian Federation, as these countries are the main actors in the Arctic territories. On the basis of comparative study the common and specific features of the model of the future expression are determined. Finally, the authors propose a new multi-polar model of the future of the Arctic region.

Key words: Arctic Region • Natural Resources • Political Risks • Political Modeling • Model of the Political Future • Programs of Political Parties

INTRODUCTION

The Arctic territories that are rich in natural resources have recently become an important place of international development and potential investments. In the foreseeable future “all across the Arctic, changes in climate will create new vulnerabilities for infrastructure and present new design challenges” [1]. The most significant changes will cause global warming. So, “despite uncertainties in the magnitude of expected global warming over the next century, one consistent feature of extant and projected changes is that Arctic environments are and will be exposed to the greatest warming” [2]. The importance of the question encourages studies in different fields. For example, “as a part of the national Norwegian monitoring program, long-term surveys of contaminants have been carried out” [3], another research “emphasizes a need to investigate non-stationary climate response of Alaskan coastal forests to warming in other tree species” [4].

Also, the point is that these climate changes in the Arctic region can cause consequences around the world. For example, “sea-ice loss and associated surface warming lead to large-scale circulation patterns that favour wet summers in northern Europe and dry summers along the northern Mediterranean” [5]. That is why “given the risks posed by climate change in the Arctic, the global response to the problem is important” [6].

Currently the juridical status of the Arctic territories is settled by the system of international agreements. There are eight sectors in the Arctic according to the number of state presented in the region: the U.S., Russia, Canada, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Denmark. Nevertheless, the development in the Arctic is heavily troubled by political and legal risks. So, “given the sensitivity of Arctic development, there is greater risk from changes in regulation or investment frameworks, following either a change of political leadership or a specific risk event, even one in which the company is not itself implicated” [7]. In addition, “the intense cold for much of the year, long periods of near-total darkness, the potential ice-pack damage to offshore facilities, the marshy tundra dictating seasonal activity in many areas and the limited biological activity all will take a huge toll on equipment and personnel” [8].

Thus, the international and global status of the Arctic region leads us to the problems of effective modeling and planning of the future of this region in connection with the future of the Arctic states as well as of the other countries.

Data Sets: Natural resources of the Arctic region, especially in oil and gas, are of an exceptional quantity. According to the United States Geological Survey, the reserves of the Arctic “are 90 billion barrels of oil, 1,669 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 44 billion barrels

of natural gas liquids. Approximately 84 per cent of these reserves are expected to be found offshore” [9]. The above-noted survey presents “the first-ever wide-ranging assessment of Arctic oil and gas resources, estimating the region’s undiscovered and technically recoverable conventional oil and natural gas resources. Of the 33 Arctic sedimentary “provinces” that the USGS evaluated, 25 were found to have a greater than 10% probability of having oil or gas deposits larger than 50 million barrels of oil equivalent” [10].

Besides, recent reports show that “disagreement over the legal status of the Northwest Passage and potentially over the status of Russian Arctic waters could lead to claims that double standards are being applied” [11]. For the Russian Federation the Arctic continental shelf is a region of high geostrategic and long-term economic interests of the state. This fact makes of this territory an independent object of national policy [12]. Russian President Vladimir Putin says that “our interests are concentrated in the Arctic. And of course we should pay more attention to issues of development of the Arctic and the strengthening of our position” [13].

Problems of the Future Modeling in Political Reality: According to the typology of British scientist Peter Laslett [14], there are four types of changes in society categorized according to their speed:

- Fast, e.g. political changes, fashion or judgment changes, changes in international relationships;
- Medium, e.g. economic, communication, technical, demographic and institutional changes;
- Slow, e.g. constitutional, religious changes; and
- Very slow, e.g. normative changes, changes of productive relations and social structure.

The problem is that the future belongs to the category of slow and very slow changes while the political transformations and events (elections, regional conflicts etc.) belong to the fast ones. So this situation provokes discordance of political cycles and problems in understanding of the future [15].

The sense of the future is organically inherent in a man as a thinking, living being. This sense is located on the basic axis of coordinates on which a person is oriented in the world [16].

This concept of the future is an important basic notion for an individual as well as for the society in general. Political concept forms one of the elements of the orientation scheme “time-space”. It brings meaning and dynamics for the actions of individuals and society.

The program of a political party structures the consciousness of electorate, performs the task of party positioning, promoting of its interests. So, the program becomes an essential element of modern political technologies.

That exactly the model of the future, the idea of how parties understand the future is of the most importance in the programs of parties [17].

Representation of the Future in the Programs of Ruling Political Parties in the U.S. and Russia: The modeling and planning of the future of the Arctic region are directly connected with the models of the future proposed by the official ideology of the Arctic region countries. Although there are eight countries bordering the Arctic, due to the global processes and general international situation, the most important actors in the Arctic region are the U.S. and Russia. Modeling of the future in the Arctic depends on the strategies and the programs of ruling parties of these two countries.

For the U.S. we will examine the Democratic Party platform “Renewing America’s Promise” [5] and for Russia, the Electoral program of “United Russia” Party [13]. The examined parties are central in the political life of the countries concerned, as they hold a majority in the parliamentary structures, their leaders hold key positions in the nation’s leadership (president, prime minister etc.). In the program of Russian party “the concept segments are represented by fairly similar tasks in social, economic fields and in public administration” [15]. In the program of American party there is an idea that the ultimate goal should be achieved not by solving of definite problems but through the approval and the revival of the basic values of a nation. Both the Democratic Party and the “United Russia” formally declare their ideology to be centrist.

Over the years the ruling political parties pretended to possess total control of the future. But nowadays, in our postmodern society the political parties have to renounce their claim to this control. Citizens are free to choose the definitive model of the future represented in one of the parties’ programs [17].

Interpretation of the Results: The structure of a political party program represents the programming image of the future. Analysis of goals, values and objectives declared in the political party platforms allows us to conclude that the governing party of the U.S. proposes the future on the basis of the principles and values of the past, while the “United Russia” creates an image of the future mostly by

reference to the prospects viewed in the present situation. Nevertheless, the “United Russia” political program contains some measures of the restoration kind, in regard to Soviet ideology. In this way the party is trying to spark the interest of a wide range of voters.

Also, the Democratic Party in its program associates the future of the country with the condition of the whole world. Its model of the future includes almost all the countries and regions of the world. The United Russia program presents only ideas of cooperation with limited number of neighbors.

The models of the future proposed by the U.S. and the Russian Federation are to a large extent contradictory. This fact does not facilitate an effective modeling and a safe planning of the future of the Arctic region. As a result of the political and military actions of the countries, “Arctic development is often politically contentious, with sometimes opposing interests and perspectives between local, national and international levels. Political support for development will continue to represent an uncertainty for businesses seeking to invest in Arctic projects” [2].

Also, “beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), countries must demonstrate that the seabed is a “natural prolongation” of the continental shelf in order to claim seabed rights. These practices have led to several overlapping claims between countries. For example, Russia has made a claim that its shelf extends all the way to the North Pole along the Lomonosov Ridge, a claim that the Canadians (as well as others) vigorously reject” [1].

At this moment the ecological, legal, political and geopolitical risks for the Arctic region remain impressive. All these risks and political pressure, unstable global balance of power in the region slow down the development of these remarkable territories.

CONCLUSION

American and Russian strategies of modeling and planning in the Arctic region cannot guarantee a safe and stable future. But today it is evident that the Arctic countries must create an effective planning system that will make sure the successive development of the Arctic region. The ideological opposition of the two leading countries of the region can destroy the future of the Arctic.

The analysis of “program documents of the political parties and the response of the voters during the last elections (2008 and 2012 in the U.S., 2007 and 2011

in Russia) suggest that there is a strong need for a political model of the future. At this stage the political parties cannot fully satisfy this need. Modern society stands in need of long-term prospects of the future”.

A new model of the future is absolutely indispensable to guarantee peace and growth in the Arctic. In the modern global world “the most successful political concepts are those that offer not only a close relationship between the future of each individual and the future of his or her region and country, but also a further link with the future of the world and humanity in general”.

If Arctic countries are to work together, they all have to make some concessions to each other’s point of view. A new model of the future will necessarily represent the mutual interests of all the actors of the Arctic region. So, only a new multi-polar image of the political future can assure effective modeling and planning of the future of the Arctic.

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